

and efficient decision-making process possible. Whether it be through legislation or simply improved preparation and communication, we must take concrete steps to ensure that in the ongoing recovery effort, bureaucratic barriers are eliminated and minimized and that resources are deployed to individuals and families in need efficaciously.

As a senior member of the House Homeland Security Committee, which has oversight over the Federal Emergency Management Administration, FEMA, I am working to ensure that our communities are prepared to deal with natural disasters. I am committed to working with members of this Select Committee and the other panelists, Federal and State agencies, and the companies that manage Houston's critical infrastructure to ensure that Houston and Texas are prepared for the next natural disaster. The protection of our homeland and the security of our neighborhoods are at the forefront of my legislative agenda.

Madam Speaker, it is my hope that this legislation, which is necessary in policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure that: first responders and emergency management personnel across America are better prepared for future disasters; communication and coordination between local, State, and Federal agencies is improved; and all Americans can recover more quickly from a future disaster.

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, there being no Members wishing to speak on my side, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1746.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GREAT LAKES ICEBREAKER REPLACEMENT ACT

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1747) to authorize appropriations for the design, acquisition, and construction of a combined buoy tender-icebreaker to replace icebreaking capacity on the Great Lakes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1747

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Great Lakes Icebreaker Replacement Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) five of the Coast Guard's Great Lakes icebreakers are nearing the end of their useful lives;

(2) two other Coast Guard icebreaking assets have experienced difficulty in heavy ice conditions;

(3) during the spring of 2008, United States-flag vessels operating on the Great Lakes suffered more than \$1,300,000 in damages to their hulls because the Coast Guard did not have enough assets available to keep Great Lakes shipping lanes open;

(4) during the 2006-2007 ice season, shipments of iron ore, coal, and limestone on the Great Lakes exceeded 20,000,000 tons;

(5) during the 2006-2007 ice season, the transportation of 10,400,000 tons of iron ore on the Great Lakes helped support 100,000 jobs at steel mills and 300,000 jobs at supplier industries by keeping those industries working during the winter season; and

(6) the 6,400,000 tons of coal shipped on the Great Lakes during the 2006-2007 ice season kept the Great Lakes region supplied with electricity.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated \$153,000,000 for necessary expenses of the Coast Guard for the design, acquisition, and construction of a combined buoy tender-icebreaker to replace icebreaking capacity on the Great Lakes, to remain available until expended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 1747.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Despite all of the concern about global climate change and climate warming and of the melting of the glaciers—and the last great glacier did melt and retreat some 10,000 years ago—every November, it makes a comeback in the northern tier States, especially on the Great Lakes. As the cold winds sweep down from the Arctic regions across Canada and as the ice gathers on the shores and extends across, still occasionally, although it has been several years, Lake Superior does freeze completely over.

When it doesn't freeze completely over, an ice sheet extends a long distance out from the shoreline, clogging the navigation channels, making transit difficult on the Sault Sainte Marie, on the St. Mary's River and down into the lower lakes where, from mid-November through mid-January and then again in early spring, our Great Lakes' bulk carriers must make that transit to deliver iron ore to the steel mills in the lower lake ports and coal from the Potter River Basin in Wyoming-Montana that comes by unit train to the ports of Duluth and Superior; and they must transit that coal to lower lake

coal facilities. The lowest cost, most energy-efficient and most environmentally friendly means of moving bulk commodities are by waterway, and this great waterway of the Great Lakes is absolutely critical.

During the 2006-2007 winter season, 10.5 million tons of iron ore moved during the winter shipping season. That ore supports 100,000 jobs at lower lake steel mills, 300,000 jobs at associated industries. In the same winter months, some 6.5 million tons of coal were shipped on the Great Lakes to supply the power plants in lower lake communities with their coal facilities, but we don't have enough icebreaking capacity to keep those channels open, to keep the ports open, to escort vessels through the heavy ice era in the fall and in the early spring.

The Coast Guard, which does its very best with the Mackinaw and with some smaller harbor icebreakers, has made a valiant effort, but the shippers on the Great Lakes, in particular in this past season, said they have frequently had a laker moving out but impeded by ice. The Mackinaw could break a channel, but then it would be on call in the lower lake ports, and the smaller harbor icebreakers couldn't keep the channel open for those 60,000-ton vessels to move iron ore or aggregate or sand and gravel or limestone as needed in the iron ore production process.

So the clear call from Great Lakes' port and shipping and shipper interests has been add an icebreaker, a real companion to the Mackinaw. The previous Mackinaw icebreaker was built in 1940 and served 60 years and, finally, was gracefully retired; but its replacement simply can't be in two places at once. If we're going to keep our economy moving and our economy functioning effectively, we need that icebreaking capability in the upper lakes and in the lower lakes, often at the same time on the same days. So with two icebreakers, our Great Lakes economy will be able to function effectively.

I reserve the balance of my time, Madam Speaker.

Mr. OLSON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, while my home State of Texas doesn't have near the opportunities for icebreaking that the chairman's home State of Minnesota has, like him, I, too, rise in support of H.R. 1747 and this body's continued efforts to enhance the Coast Guard's operational capabilities in the Great Lakes and nationwide.

A new Coast Guard icebreaker of the Great Lakes would significantly enhance the safety and efficiency of maritime traffic in the region. The Coast Guard is aware of the need for further capabilities in the Great Lakes.

Earlier this winter, the Coast Guard temporarily stationed an ice-strengthened buoy tender in the Great Lakes for the end of the icebreaking season. This move, while greatly appreciated, is not a sustainable solution. H.R. 1747,

the Great Lakes Icebreaker Replacement Act, will address future icebreaking needs by providing a fully capable, multimission icebreaker to the Great Lakes. In addition to its role as an icebreaker, the new vessel will be equipped with capabilities to support all of the Coast Guard's many missions, which will greatly enhance the service's ability to carry out search and rescue, fishery enforcement, and maritime homeland security missions throughout the year.

I hope this bill is only the beginning of Congress' efforts to enhance the Coast Guard's icebreaking capability. As many Members know, the Coast Guard's seagoing polar icebreakers are in dire need of rehabilitation or of outright replacement. I would hope that we could address this issue through the Coast Guard reauthorization bill later this year.

Historically, polar regions have been closed off to vessel traffic for a significant amount of time. However, in recent years, we have seen an increase in the amount of open time and water and a corresponding interest in the commercial use of these waters. We have extensive scientific, national security, homeland security, and economic interests in the Arctic; but we do not have the vessels necessary to project a continued maritime presence in these regions. We must come up with a solution to address this gap to protect our national interests as other Arctic nations are racing forward to explore and stake claim to resources in the polar regions.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the gentleman from Texas for his strong support and for his thoughtful statement about the Great Lakes icebreaker. I want to assure the gentleman, Madam Speaker, that we'll be happy to assure that the only ice you ever have to break in the Texas ports will be at cocktail hour, because you don't want to have to deal with the ice as we see it and as we experience it in the Great Lakes where I grew up and lived most of my life.

□ 1530

But I know the needs for the Houston ship channel, which I strongly supported. It's going to need more dredging, more improvement, as the Panama Canal, the second Panama Canal, is completed in the next few years and those 1,000-foot carriers carrying 12- to 13,000 containers make their way through Panama and into the gulf ports—all the ports in Texas and Louisiana and Alabama are going to need a channel deepening and port upgrades to accommodate those vessels. And we're going to support that activity in our committee. We're going to make sure that the gulf region is competitive in this ever-changing world of international commerce.

With regard to the polar icebreakers, the Recovery Act stimulus funding has provided for refurbishing and reintro-

duction in service of one of the polar icebreakers. I would advise the gentleman, Madam Speaker, the Coast Guard is doing an evaluation of the costs and how the costs of the polar icebreaker fleet can be contained. We have received testimony in the 110th Congress and information updated this year that the cost per icebreaker might run in the range of \$1 billion. It seems to me that the Coast Guard ought to be able to contain that number and bring it down to something much more manageable.

Those original polar classes, the Polar Wind, the Polar Star—I remember very well serving with Mr. YOUNG, our former committee chairman on Transportation and Infrastructure, and we both served on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee in the seventies when those vessels were commissioned and then when they set out on their first voyage. My recollection is it was less than \$100 million, and the cost has escalated enormously; and we have to be sure that the Coast Guard—and they, too, want to be sure they can contain those costs and assure a multimission activity for those icebreakers.

Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all Texans, I think your solution to an icebreaker in Texas would be much appreciated there. And I want to thank you, too, for your kind and insightful remarks about the needs of our ports in the gulf coast, particularly the Port of Houston and Port of Galveston and Texas City.

As you alluded to, the ports there, unfortunately, have a lot of silt coming down from the rivers above. They fill up from time to time, and we need to keep them dredged out. And you have eloquently made the point that when the Panama Canal project is completed—widened and deepened—the ships that are currently coming across the Pacific Ocean and stop at our west coast are just going to continue right on through and come to our heartland. So I look forward to working with you to make sure that the gulf ports are ready for that when it happens.

Mr. OBERSTAR. If the gentleman will yield?

Mr. OLSON. Yes, I will.

Mr. OBERSTAR. It is not only the silt from the rivers but the hurricanes that have devastated and in the last 5 years have brought enormous amounts of silt into those harbors. And we have worked with the Corps of Engineers to accelerate dredging. We had, actually, funding for an accelerated dredging program for the Corps of Engineers in the Recovery Act, and those funds have not yet been released by the Office of Management and Budget, but I am very hopeful that some of those funds, Madam Speaker, will be directed to the gulf coast ports to alleviate the adverse effects of hurricane movement of sand into the shipping channels.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. OLSON. I appreciate the gentleman's comments on that as well.

I was down at the Port of Texas City last month, and they brought a ship in early this year, as you alluded to, after the hurricane had come through. The way it rolled in, a lot of the way the storm was moving, it pushed the water, it brought the silt back towards the ocean, and they brought a ship in with 6 inches of clearance, a 5-, 600-foot boat and that much clearance. And I appreciate your commitment to work with that.

I see no one on my side of the aisle. I thank the chairman for his kind remarks.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks. We look forward to moving the Water Resources Development Act bill through the committee this year and addressing in that legislation whatever accelerated dredging needs may be beyond those we already have in the recovery program to address the imminent issue facing us, and that is vastly increased vessel capacity and size that needs to move into those gulf ports. And meanwhile, maybe the Coast Guard can get started—if the other body will move this bill—get started on an icebreaker replacement.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1747.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRIGHT) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H. Res. 329, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 1746, by the yeas and nays;

H. Res. 335, de novo.